

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The 2007/08 Legislative Session: Year Two

January and February 2008 set the stage for budget and legislative activity for the rest of this year, the second year of a two-year legislative session. February 22nd was the last day to introduce bills for consideration in this session.

Changes in Senate and Assembly Leadership

In February, Senate Democrats selected Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) as the next leader of the California State Senate, succeeding President *pro tempore* Don Perata (D-Oakland). Steinberg reportedly will take over as Senate leader late in August. He currently is chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee. Late in February, Assembly Democrats voted unanimously to elect Assemblymember Karen Bass, (D-Los Angeles) as the next Speaker of the Assembly. Bass will replace current Speaker Fabian Núñez (D-Los Angeles), who is termed out of office this year.

Water Bond Update

In 2007, numerous water bond proposals were introduced to address the state's water supply needs. Unable to reach a compromise during the regular legislative session, the Governor called for a special session on water, which again yielded no resolution. By the end of 2007, Senator Perata and the California Chamber of Commerce had each filed various versions of a water bond initiative for the November 2008 ballot.

By January, Senator Perata had abandoned his proposal for a water bond; and one of the key supporters of the Chamber of Commerce's water bond initiatives, the Alliance for Jobs, announced that it was no longer supporting the Chamber's efforts. Despite this, and in an attempt to gain support from the Governor and Senator Feinstein, the Chamber re-filed a revised version of one of their four initial proposals in early February.

By the end of February, when the Governor and Senator Feinstein convened an initial meeting of legislative leaders and stakeholders to reach a compromise on water bond language, it became clear that they would not be supporting the Chamber's proposed

initiative. This show of support for a compromise on the legislative water bond may have ended the Chamber's initiative campaign.

Legislative Summary Report

In response to an October 2007 report from the LAO detailing perceived inefficiencies in the natural resources land acquisition process, several legislators are looking to standardize the process by which natural resources lands are appraised and acquired.

Legislation proposed this year would affect how properties, conservation lands in particular, are appraised and acquired by the state and nonprofit organizations.

The following bills have been introduced to address natural resources land acquisition and appraisal processes:

- Assemblymember Laird (D-Santa Cruz) introduced **AB 2455**, which currently contains only legislative intent language. This bill will be amended to include language reflecting soon-to-be-released recommendations from the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Resources Agency. In 2006 Assemblymember Laird's **AB 2497** was signed into law, creating a DOF and Resources Agency working group to identify necessary reforms to the state's land acquisition and appraisal processes.
- Senator Corbett (D-San Leandro) introduced **SB 1285**, which would direct the Resources Agency to work with the Wildlife Conservation Board and the State Coastal Conservancy to develop and adopt various land acquisition and appraisal standards. Modeled after the LAO's three central recommendations, this bill would provide standards for appraisals, the objectivity of the appraisals, and the public transparency of the associated processes.
- Senator Cogdill (R-Fresno) introduced **SB 1323**, which would amend the state's appraisal and acquisition process. This bill would require, after January 2010, the Department of General Services (DGS) to review each independent land appraisal according to various new standards that would be created by DGS.

Other bills to note:

Santa Susana State Park Joint Powers Authority

Assemblymember Smyth (R-Santa Clarita) introduced **AB 1842**, which would authorize the formation of a joint powers entity, the Santa Susana State Park Joint Powers Authority (SSSPJPA). The SSSPJPA would be composed of the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park

District, the County of Los Angeles, the County of Ventura, the City of Los Angeles, and the City of Simi Valley.

Parks and open space: Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor: boundary revisions

Senator Runner (R-Antelope Valley) introduced **SB 1180**, which would amend Section 33204.4 of the Public Resources Code to allow the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to revise the boundaries of the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor in the vicinity of the City of Santa Clarita, including Whitney Canyon, Elsmere Canyon, and their adjacent watersheds.

Brush Management

Assemblymember Anderson (R-El Cajon) introduced **AB 1847** which would declare the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to expedite the permit process for brush management in extremely high fire risk areas.

Important Dates

March 24: Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy, 10:00 am